

American Research Center In Egypt, Inc.

NEWSLETTER



THE AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER IN EGYPT, INCORPORATED

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS FOR THE HOME OFFICE

The attention of members should be drawn to the new address of the Center given above. Need of increased space, due to the expanded activities and increased personnel of the Center, has necessitated removal of headquarters from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, which has so long and so generously provided space for our organization

THE NEW ADDRESS OF THE CENTER IN CAIRO

The following letter from Mme. Labib Habachi, Secretary of the Center in Cairo since 1961, here translated from the original French in which it was written, provides a charming introduction to the communications from members and friends of our organization now in Egypt, which appear on the following pages of this Newsletter. Mme. Habachi, the wife of a well-known Egyptian archaeologist, has been of invaluable assistance through her intimate knowledge of the country of her birth, its language and its people.

Dear Members:

Thanks to our new Director, Mr. Ray W. Smith, I now have an opportunity to converse with you. First, allow me to introduce myself: I am secretary in the Cairo office of the Center, and have been for the past three years. I am not going to speak to you today about my first contact with the Center and with Americans, a new world to an Egyptian of ancient heritage; I shall leave that, if you permit, until later, and content myself now with describing for you our new office and talking of our activities.

The Center is now located on the sixth floor of 2 Midan Kasr el Dubbara (Apt. 37) in one of the best buildings of Cairo. The name of the building is El Shams, that is, "The Sun." The word "shams" is very frequent in Egypt; sometimes it is a proper name, at others it is the name of a town. It is perhaps reminiscent of the sun-god Re, now arabicised. We are a few steps from the Embassy of the United States of America, from the great hotels of the city, such as the Semiramis, Shepheard's, the Nile Hilton, and above all we are only a few minutes distant from the office of the Antiquities Service, the Egyptian Museum, and the Documentation Center, with which we are in constant touch.

The expansion of the American Research Center in Egypt has meant tripled effort. Last year, our activities were concentrated on the expedition of the Center excavating at Gebel Adda in Nubia. But today an increase of work in connection with other expeditions planned for the coming Spring demands all our forces. Thus my life has become fuller and my work day passes in a vertiginous rhythm. I'm happy about all this, for it means that everybody in Cairo is now beginning to become better acquainted with the American Research Center in Egypt, and the tiresome persons who formerly came to ask me stupid questions have vanished.

It is hardly three months since we have expanded the activities of our Center, and we hope that in the near future, through united effort, we shall

realize the goal we have set. In a few days, we shall have a new door-plate on which the name of the Center will appear in English and Arabic, with the colors of the flags of the United States and the United Arab Republic harmoniously intertwined, as a living symbol of the collaboration and friendship of the two nations. The United States have always had a basic interest in encouraging science and art. Egypt, proud of its glorious past, is today conscious of her important place not only in Africa but in the world, and looks forward to a future no less glorious. And we Egyptians who are friends of the United States hope to see the American Research Center in Egypt take its place among the other great foreign institutes in Cairo, one of which, l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, has already celebrated its centennial.

Thank you, dear readers, for your kind attention. I close this letter with the hope of meeting at least some of you, here or in America, in order to tell you, viva voce, how happy and proud I am to be one of the family of the American Research Center in Egypt.

Attiya Habachi

THE SECOND SEASON AT GEBEL ADDA

Gebel Adda Camp
January 8, 1964

Dear Members:

After a delay of a few days occasioned by the necessity of making repairs on our dahabia, the "Osiris", the second season of the Nubian Expedition began with our arrival at Gebel Adda on December 15th. Since our workmen had arrived ahead of us, we were able to begin work on the morning of the sixteenth, and accordingly, at dawn, the ancient walls of Adda resounded again with the Guftis' working song.

We began operations this year with further investigation of the old Meroitic burial-ground, Cemetery Three, since our architect had to be given time to make the working drawings that are the necessary preliminary to our work on the Citadel. Our main concern in this cemetery is to try to find Meroitic graves which have not been re-used by the later X-group invaders who descended into the Nile Valley about the end of the Third Century A. D. The finds from such unre-used tombs, both pottery and skeletal material, are needed to fill a major gap in our comparative material, and we are also eager to locate any informative inscriptions which may have survived from the Meroitic superstructures. Insofar as the first of these goals is concerned we are beginning to despair of having any success at all; every tomb we open seems to have been relentlessly cleaned out of body, pots, and everything else, down to the last bead, and used again by the newcomers. What the latter did with the original contents will presumably always be a mystery.

With the second point we have had more success. In the course of clearing the meter or so of accumulated sand from the surface of the cemetery, we have found a certain number of sandstone offering tables and stela, as well as many

fragments, inscribed in linear Meroitic writing with the names, titles, and relationships of the persons originally buried in the usurped tombs. Such things are, of course, never as informative as one would wish them to be, but among the individuals buried at Adda were two "kharpkhans", or governors, of Pakharas, the modern Faras just over the Sudanese border. Other persons named in the inscriptions are the children of peshtes, or princes, and several persons referred to as the descendants of "river-generals", who may have been the governors of Meroitic Nubia. The fact that two of the governors of a major town ten miles away were buried at Adda strengthens the possibility that our city was the administrative center of a large area, whose chief rulers were presumably buried in the largest of the pyramids found last year. In the course of our clearing this year, we have found the remains of six more pyramids of the same type, with stone foundations, and five smaller ones which were built entirely of mud-brick. Excavation of these is under way at the moment, although our investigation of one of them is quite blocked by the fact that a telephone pole was planted right in the middle of the tomb-chamber! Never mind - they must take the poles down sometime and we will get into it sooner or later.

A pleasant interlude in our work was occasioned by the visit of the ketch Yankee of Mystic, Connecticut, whose captain, Irving Johnson, brought her all the way from the sea up to the Second Cataract in a voyage of several weeks. Among those on board was Mr. Win Parks, photographer for the National Geographic Magazine, with which Captain Johnson has had a close association for many years. Since the National Geographic Society makes a considerable contribution to the financing of our Expedition, the Captain and his party knew that we were to be found here, and they visited us on the way up-river and then again coming down, when they all had dinner with us on the Osiris, the party then including Gil Grosvenor, the editor of the Geographic, and his wife, who had joined the "crew" in Wady Halfa. Many readers of the Newsletter will be familiar with the Yankee or its square-rigged predecessor of the same name, both of which have been frequently seen in the harbors and ports of the East Coast.

At the moment, the Abu Simbel reach of the river is a hive of archaeological activity. The work on the raising of the temple itself has not yet begun, although it will be started within a fortnight. The University of Leiden Expedition under Dr. Klasens has been working at Shokan, north of Abu Simbel, and has just turned its attention to the second of the two sites on the Netherlands concession, a Christian site known as "Site A", since it lacks a better name. Here they are excavating a church, perhaps of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries, which has frescoes like those the Poles have been finding at Faras. Although the paintings are not nearly so well preserved, there is still a great deal to see at Shokan, and we are hoping to make a trip there some Friday soon to inspect them for ourselves. A joint Yugoslavian and Egyptian mission of technical experts has just arrived at the nearby rock-cut shrine of Abu Oda to remove the damaged Christian frescoes there overlying the reliefs of Horemheb. They have discovered new traces, including the head of a royal figure and two new very faint old Nubian inscriptions. We at Adda are all very much interested in their progress, since the two sites are very close and there seems to have been a close connection between the temple at its Christian period (when it was called the "Cave of Saint Epimachos") and our city. One of the kings of Adda, or "the lower D6", as it was called to distinguish it from the Du on Sai Island, was a man named Joel, who left a long ink graffito on the wall of the sanctuary. Incidentally, we have tentatively identified

another king of Dô in a personage named Taanengo in a graffito found a few days ago on a loose block on our own citadel. The inscription seems to have been written by the mayor of a subject town called Akirimip, whose name was Grailekor, but it is impossible to date most of such things, and we can only guess at a date somewhere between 750 and 1000 A.D.

The Nubian Expedition of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute is again hard at work to the south of us, this time on the great cemeteries on the west bank at Ballana. They report rich finds of Meroitic material, including quantities of the fine painted pottery of the period, and we envy them their good fortune in this respect. Dr. Seele has a new crew with him this year, and we are only sorry that the pressure of work has not permitted them yet to visit us or us them.

Signs are beginning to appear of the impending migration of the people of Ballana to their new homes in the north. Day after day a stream of white-clad figures can be seen moving along the west bank in the direction of house of the Omda, or mayor, where they must register their names and list their goods in order to collect the compensation money due them from the Government. In a month or two the first immigrants will begin to leave, and it is said that the village will be empty by the beginning of summer. We paid our usual beginning-of-season courtesy call on the Omda, Tawfik Rashwan, whose house is directly across from us and who is therefore inclined to consider us his own personal expedition, since we have now become part of the view he has been enjoying for at least the last thirty years. He is a very old man indeed now - he was already omda in the days when Emery was finding the treasures of the X-group kings in the mounds of Ballana and Qustul in the early thirties - and has already seen a great many changes in Nubia. We had a very pleasant tea with him, including some fine English tea-biscuits, which had been brought in without undue fanfare from Wady Halfa and were far better than anything we have. During the session, I noticed for the first time that the lowest step of his terrace stairs consists of a long block of sandstone with a frieze of well-carved cobras, the lintel, in fact, of one of the Meroitic gates of our Citadel! Under the circumstances it seemed rather tactless to draw our host's attention to it, and I had to content myself with measuring it in a crafty manner with my walking-stick when his back was turned. After the last villagers go, we will make a full-scale raid into the empty houses to collect this and any other souvenirs of Adda which have found their way into the walls of the modern dwellers.

Nick Millet

LIFE IN GEBEL ADDA

Mr. Fred Anderepp, Supervisor of Photographic Services, The University of Michigan, has kindly contributed to the Newsletter the following account of a recent visit to Gebel Adda. His lively description gives an idea of the conditions under which the Center's expeditionary force lives in its isolated post.

When Nick Millet and other members of the American Research Center in Egypt visited our Alexandria - Michigan - Princeton Expedition to the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, he casually invited my Swiss assistant, John Galey, and

myself to spend a few days with him at Gebel Adda, asking us to wire him to let him know when we would arrive. As the end of our vacation in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and the Sudan approached, we began to look forward to visiting Nubia and to see some of the interesting work going on in that area. When we arrived in Wadi Halfa, we soon found that Nick's casual "come and see us" belied the difficulties involved.

Leaving John to watch the baggage, I went in search of a car to drive us to Gebel Adda. This was somewhat difficult, for no one had ever heard of the place, but I finally found a chauffeur who was willing to take a chance. He then had to make endless preparations, procuring multitudinous permits, buying food for our lunch, clearing the car through customs. I, in the meantime, proceeded to get our own permits and to have our passports checked. It was very important to find out whether the next boat downstream would stop at Abu Simbel, where Nick had promised to deliver us for our journey back into Egypt. Such checking might sound simple, but in that part of the world nothing is. The person I had to see was on a boat that was just making ready to leave. The Sudanese guard at the gangplank was adamant -- it was impossible to permit me to go aboard to see him without a ticket. Eventually, I was able to persuade a deck hand to ask the person who knew about the schedules to come to the rail topside, and I shouted my query to him. Yes, the boat would stop at Abu Simbel. Finally we loaded our suitcases into the trunk of our hired 1947 Ford, which was sealed by the customs, and then went to send a wire to Nick. I found that a telegram would go to Ballana, across the river from Gebel Adda, from where it would be delivered by mail. Needless to say, I did not send it.

It was two hours after we had arrived in Wadi Halfa before we at last set off into the unknown. Unknown it was, for the driver was uncertain of the location, and we ourselves were not at all sure if Nick & Co. had arrived at the site. The jouncing journey through village after village of mud huts, twisting through narrow valleys (for there was no road worthy of the name) was interesting, yet sad. Interesting, because of the picturesque groups of houses, each decorated with gay designs; sad, because every house had painted on it a sign denoting the date at which the occupants would be evacuated to a new home, to escape the rising waters caused by the new High Dam at Aswan.

At the last village we came to, our driver stopped at a butcher's shack before which a freshly killed sheep was hanging and bought a good-sized chunk of meat "for the police at the border". We then headed into the open desert, following a route pointing roughly north. Within an hour, we reached the Sudanese border and the police post -- a hut, a radio, some cots, and four soldiers. The soldiers were delighted with the meat and made us tea to drink with our lunch. They regretted that their police boat was out of commission, with the result that they could not take us across the river to visit Faras, which we wanted to see. We never did see it, for a boatman in the neighborhood refused to ferry us over the river, as the wind was much too strong.

We had no trouble passing Sudanese inspection, but within half a mile we reached the tent of the Egyptian police, where our bags were taken out of the car and subjected to the most thorough inspection we had met with during our entire journey. Soon we came to a small village, where we found a guide to take us to "the Americans living on a boat". The only trouble was that they were not the right Americans, and they were all out in the field. Someone volunteered that he thought that there was another boat with Americans a few miles downstream, and we

again set off hopefully. Before long we came to a spot where the track took off inland and became very bad indeed. The driver rightfully refused to take his vintage car any further. We called a peasant who was irrigating his field. Yes, he would show us the way -- it was just a ten-minute walk. So we hired a burro to carry our luggage, I put my camera on my head, and we took off on foot into the biting wind.

The ten minutes stretched to an hour and ten minutes, but we finally reached a boat that was inhabited and, lo and behold, by the right party! There was much rejoicing by all hands, and we now hold the dubious honor of being the first guests to have walked into the camp at Gebel Adda. It was shortly after two o'clock, and we found the members of the expedition just gathering for lunch on the top deck, which was closed to the winds by tarpaulins. After lunch, Jean Keith graciously gave up her siesta to show us around the dig, by which we were properly impressed.

It was not long before the sun set, and it grew very cold. Bit by bit, all hands gathered on deck, heavily bundled up against the bitter wind. Some talked shop and others listened to that amusing raconteur and source of endless French songs, Hubert Queloz, who brings gaiety to the staff after a gruelling day.

We spent three crowded and most interesting days at Gebel Adda. The quarters on the boat seemed luxurious to this ex-geologist, but such comfort as they offer is certainly necessary -- living in a tent in that region would be just too cruel, and the staff works hard enough to deserve all the comforts possible to provide. Everyone is up at five and in the field until two in the afternoon -- and New Year's Day was for them just like any other day. In all modern archaeological field work, the daily task is not only painstaking but laborious, and this dig is no exception.

It is an unforgettable sound-picture to see the sun rise over the native diggers and sand-carriers and to hear their chanted responses to their leader's chanted phrases. The tunes are simple repetitions of three or four notes, but the melody and rhythm are haunting. I could fancy such antiphonal singing on the slave ships of long ago. As the sun rises higher, all hands begin to shed bits of clothing; by noon, the temperature reaches a decent level. I marvelled at the amount and excellent quality of the work turned out by the artists, sheltered from the high winds by a sturdy tent. The tent diffuses the light very nicely, but how comfortable it will be later in the season, when the weather becomes unbearably hot, is something else again!

Rumor has it that the water-level will be twenty feet higher in a year, so there is feverish activity in areas that are likely to be flooded. Work on the citadel is proceeding at a more normal pace; though this part of the dig should prove to be most interesting, it is not in immediate danger.

The group at Gebel Adda has no clock-watchers. Although the working day technically ends at two in the afternoon, many give up their siestas to continue with their work or start in again after a short rest. Life on the boat is never dull. I was astonished at the high quality of the food served -- the chef produces miracles of gastronomic delight, especially considering the location of the excavation.

Our last day at Gebel Adda started badly. First, the cat fell into the water. Then the wind died down and the falucca had to be rowed to Abu Simbel. Finally,

after fifteen minutes of rowing, we discovered that one bag had been left behind and had to return for it -- fortunately the steamer was hours late! None of these mishaps, however, could mar the happy glow created by our very pleasant stay at the dig in Gebel Adda.

THE CENTER'S EXCAVATION AT FUSTAT

As previously reported, Dr. George T. Scanlon, former Bollingen Fellow of the Center in Egypt, has been chosen to head the Center's excavation of the earliest Islamic capital. In the following letter, he outlines the work projected for the coming season.

Cairo, 8 January, 1963

Dear Members:

On the first of December, my right ankle was broken in three places and I was condemned to two months in plaster from toe to knee. I had to forego joining the Center's expedition at Gebel Adda on December 15 and to postpone the initiation of the dig at Fustat from the 15th of February to the 1st of March. I will mitigate the first disaster by going to Nubia tomorrow to see if I can work at all profitably on the Citadel, whose Islamic structures are presently being cleared. We had hoped that these structures might reveal the original date of Islamic control of the area, possibly relating it to the great victory of Ibrahim al-Kurdi, a general of Saladin, over the Christians about 1170 A. D. There is no doubt of the ascendancy of Islam by Mamluk times, as certain shards rescued last season from the Citadel and the talus attest. However, my work will depend entirely upon the degree of peril to my knitting limb. After three weeks in bed and another two hobbling about on my cane, I feel compelled spiritually to make the test.

The excavation at Fustat represents in a sense the renaissance of Islamic archaeology in Egypt. It is the first concession awarded to a foreign institution in some forty years. (One excepts the work of Wiet, who as director of the Arab Museum, was an Egyptian civil servant; and that of Creswell, whose clearing and restoring of the North Wall was executed under the patronage of the former royal family). For the most part my work will be salvage archaeology, i.e. to see what lies beneath sections ear-marked for road construction and low-income housing.

The largest section conceded to the Center abuts the work of Aly Bahgat, the original excavator of medieval Fustat. Logically, this section should yield respectable quantities of glazed pottery, coins, glass, stucco and wooden fragments, and some textiles. Architecturally, the ground plans of the houses uncovered will parallel (with hoped-for variations) those of the Tulunid and Fatimid period revealed by Bahgat. (The entire city lies upon Muqattam stone, and the work envisaged presents practically no problems of stratigraphy. No rebuilding upon original work accrued). Two months of the four-month season will be given over to this area, with the remainder to be worked the following season.

A piece of land adjacent to and east of the late mosque of Abu al-Su'ud will be cleared, to reveal what lies beneath the area ear-marked for housing. The work of Marzouk and of Rashid and Hawary (all subsequent to Bahgat), of which

very little has been published, leads one to suspect that this area represents, either separately or in combination, the suburbs of Al-Askar and Al-Qata'I, the next stages in the growth of the Islamic capital of Egypt. The shafts of a couple of columns, sticking through the rubbish, attracted my eye, and should these represent columns of atria on either side of the usual courtyard, we'll have a variant on the domestic scheme, a type Bahgat surmised but which he could not find exactly.

The third piece allowed the Center, stretches due east from the northern-most revealed section of the wall of Saladin towards the quarries of Batn al-Baqara. It had been thought that when Saladin constructed his wall, he skirted the ruins of Fustat. (The last Fatimid grand vizir put the old town to the flames in 1168, rather than have it fall into the hands of a Crusading army under Amaury, the king of Jerusalem. It lay outside the newly-walled quarter of Al-Qahirah, and could be used as a point d'appui against the Royal Quarter. Fustat was the most populous part of the capital and continued through the high Fatimid period to be the commercial center). Yet, when the wall itself was excavated by Rashid and Hawary, it was found that some structures were east of it. Thus, the problem remains: just how far east did Fustat extend?

I hope to trench this third section to the west edge of quarry. Should habitation proceed to that edge, a very interesting discovery on the east side is given great significance. In the late thirties and early forties (the chronology is difficult to define since no reports of the work have been published), Marzouk and Hawari unearthed what look like a series of textile dyeing factories, probably Fatimid. One of these falls off at the quarry edge, dangerously and abruptly so. Thus, if our Center's excavation should find habitation up to the quarry's edge directly opposite this, then we're safe in assuming that the quarry was worked subsequent to the destruction of Fustat, and that this medieval metropolis spread much farther east than the work of Bahgat intimated; further, that its perimeter was attended by factories, and most probably by cemeteries, which have yet to be ascertained in detail. It is this "city planning" or rather "city-happening" which comes to fascinate the student. But only a full survey of the excavations to date (which must follow our piece-meal and salvage archaeology) will reveal the substance to fascinate and instruct. The only introduction to the whole problem which the reader might find is a published report of Bahgat and Gabriel (his architect) entitled Les Fouilles d'al Foustat (1923). How much less prosaic than our strings of basket-boys are Bahgat's succession of panniered camels!

Dr. Mustafa has retired as Director of the Islamic Museum and has been succeeded by his deputy, Dr. Hamdy.

George T. Scanlon

A VISITOR FROM NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

During the Christmas recess, Professor Donald P. Hansen of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, came to Egypt to consult with the officers of the Center in Cairo and to explore the possibilities of the excavation of a large kom in the Delta by New York University.

Dr. Hansen, who specializes in ancient Near Eastern Art and Archaeology,

has had wide field experience since 1955, when he joined the Oriental Institute expedition to Nippur. He also worked for five seasons at Sardis in Turkey, 1958-1962, and he was Annual Professor of the Baghdad School of the American Schools of Oriental Research when he left Nippur in the spring of 1963 to join the faculty of the Graduate School of New York University.

The problems confronting the excavator of a Delta site are, for the most part, similar to those found in other fertile regions of the Near and Middle East and quite different from those encountered in the Nile valley of Upper Egypt. In the latter, a site is -- or was -- usually buried by sand or wind-blown dust and consists of one, two or, at the most, three successive levels of civilization. In the Delta, however, the ancient cities and temples are not buried in sand, but in the remains of brickwork made of black mud -- often fused together by thousands of years of rainfall -- and because of the restrictions imposed by the expansion of agricultural acreage, the sites have over the millennia grown vertically rather than spread out horizontally and consist of numerous strata of successive human activities. Many of them were used for habitation and richly saturated with garbage and other organic matter for hundreds and hundreds of years, which is the reason why the peasants in the adjoining countryside have long used such ancient koms as a convenient source of fertilizer, called sebbakh, and thus denuded and reduced in height and area most of the ancient Pharaonic and Greco-Roman sites with which the Delta was still studded in the beginning of this century.

Only a few sizeable koms are still preserved today in Lower Egypt, and it is with a view toward unraveling the complex structure of an ancient city and temple mound that an American excavation of such a site is being planned at the present time. For this an experienced mound digger has to be consulted, which was the reason for calling Professor Hansen to Egypt.

In the company of an officer of the Center presently in Cairo, Mr. Hansen visited Tanis, Tell Basta, Mendes and intermediate sites in Northern Egypt and then went to the southern border of the U.A.R., to Gebel Adda, a few miles north of Wadi Halfa, to visit the Center's excavation of a Meroitic and X-group cemetery, which is being conducted by Mr. Nicholas B. Millet, the Center's Archaeological Field Director. He then returned to New York by plane.

A COLOSSAL STATUE OF ISIS

Alexandria, January 13, 1964

Dear Members:

Judging from the number of inquiries received here, I assume that news of the discovery last spring of a colossal granite statue of Isis in the waters off Fort Kait Bey must have reached the American and European press. What probably was not reported was its "rediscovery" in the fall, after a long and puzzling silence as to its whereabouts. Many who read the newspapers here in October had no idea that the monument in question had previously been found, while others who had heard of the initial find thought this to be a second one. What seems to have happened was simply an unfortunate accident whereby the statue, while temporarily resting on a barge in the harbor, was submerged again during one of those sudden violent storms that occasionally forces closure of the port. Subsequently

drawn up again, the Isis, a Ptolemaic figure in Egyptian style, reportedly measuring eight meters and weighing twenty-three tons, is now safely on land, though in a restricted military area. To remove it from its present seclusion, however, and give it full exposure is evidently the plan of those city officials who decide on such matters. In fact, the most recent newspaper item declares that the monument is to be set up in front of the Faculty of Engineering (University of Alexandria) building on a particularly broad and handsome stretch of Avenue El-Horreya. It would surely be an imposing sight there. One only hopes that drivers will be able to keep their eyes on the road!

Also on restricted military territory is a recent find at Abuqir of a tomb containing remains of mummified birds inside pottery vessels. This brings to mind the large quantities of ibis and falcon mummies at Abusir (Taposiris Magna) in burial chambers which also contained numerous remains of fish swathed in linen. Worship of animals was of course always regarded by Greek observers as one of the most bizarre and therefore fascinating characteristics of Egyptian religious life. Diodorus, who visited Egypt towards the middle of the first century B. C., and the first book of whose history is one of the famous Greek sources on Egypt, informs us that the ibis and the cat are especially revered. Anyone who intentionally kills one of the ordinary sacred animals is put to death, but anyone who either accidentally or intentionally kills an ibis or cat is treated in the same way, sometimes without benefit of trial.

Dawson Kiang

DEMOLITION IN CAIRO

Like every great city of the modern world, Cairo is today faced with problems arising out of the rapid increase in population and the mechanization of methods of transportation. Old Cairo, with its crowding buildings and its narrow, winding streets, is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. As in other cities of the East and West, there is in Cairo a conflict of opinion between those who advocate complete and ruthless modernization and those who wish to preserve, for sentimental or aesthetic reasons or for both, the essential character of a locality. In the following letter, Mr. Little, a Fellow of the Center engaged in Islamic studies, offers a translation of a recent article from a Cairene newspaper, which seems like a far echo of the protests against the proposed destruction of the Weld Boathouse and the immemorial plane trees of Cambridge, which have recently furnished headlines in the Boston press.

Cairo, January 6, 1964

Dear Members:

Last year at this time I reported on measures planned by the Egyptian Government for improving certain sections of medieval Cairo by clearing unsightly areas around mosques and generally making the city more attractive for tourists. So far, the old potteries adjacent to the mosque of 'Amr ibn al-'As are still standing, and the square in front of the mosque of al-Husayn has not, as projected, been converted into a parking lot. The beautiful gardens of Manyal Palace, however, are the site of a hotel; four hundred tourist chalets are being erected in what were formerly the grounds of Lutfullah Palace in Zamalak; and All Saint's Cathedral will be torn down to make room for a new

bridge across the Nile.

The beginning of demolition work on two fairly modern buildings just off Midan-at-Tahrir, in the heart of downtown Cairo, has inspired an article by Angi Rushdi, which appeared in Cairo's leading newspaper, Al-Ahram, on December 23rd last. Since it reflects the divided opinion on the modernization of Cairo existing among the Egyptians, the following loose translation may be of interest to readers of the Newsletter.

WHAT NEXT? DESTRUCTION OF THE HOUSE OF HUDA SHA'RAWI AND THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART HAS BEGUN!

Why Should the Beautification of Cairo be at the Expense of her Islamic Character?

Fifty days hence the area containing Huda Sha'rawi's house and the Museum of Modern Art will have been razed to a level surface. Protests have been lodged against the destruction of Huda Sha'rawi's house because of the history and memories within the house, which was inhabited by the pioneer of the Feminist Movement in Egypt.

Tourist Director Rashad Murad announced that it was finally decided to destroy the house as well as the Museum of Modern Art in order to accommodate a huge hotel, as a measure to help solve the hotel crisis which afflicts the city. But the state will dedicate a hall in the hotel in commemoration of Huda Sha'rawi's memory; it will take the form of the hall in which the Feminist Movement was born, and its walls will bear the arabesques from the old home.

I visited the house of Huda Sha'rawi, which is at present being demolished. There, Azab Khalil, supervisor of the demolition, told me that all the debris, including the ceiling, windows, doors, and the arabesques from the walls of the hall, will be sold to the first comer. He had, in fact, heard that the government wants to buy the arabesques, but until that time no steps had been taken to do so.

There is no objection to development in and of itself or to an attempt to beautify Cairo, but development and beautification should be made in the right direction and not at the expense of art and the aesthetic form of the city.

This demolition has disquieted Hasan 'Abd al-Wahhab, Islamic monuments expert and member of the Higher Council for Monuments. He believes that the house was built in good taste, with a facade in the spacious Arabic style. It is not necessary to exaggerate the importance of the copper door, the salon with a Damascene ceiling, the wooden cabinets (copies of 17/18th century carpentry), the beautiful fountain (17th century copy), etc. If it is not possible to preserve the house, filled with memories of a lady whom we cherish and honor, the government should at least preserve these relics. After all the government does need them, since the governor of Cairo is at present building an Arabic-style house in which foreign visitors can spend a day or have tea. To replace these doors and windows in sufficient numbers at the same level of craftsmanship would require several years.

I regret just as much the destruction of the Museum of Modern Art, the Zaghib home, because it was built in the true Arabic style and represents, in fact, the best modern example of that style. It is worthy of preservation for

touristic purposes.

How to replace such an architectural treasure is a familiar problem, since craftsmen are rapidly making themselves extinct by refusing to offer instruction in the arts which they inherited from their forebears. Such constitutes a peril to Egyptian monuments in general. Of old, these craftsmen undertook works which bear witness to their genius in repairing monuments, and the Lepartment of Pious Endowments used to erect mosques in the true Arabic style, such as the mosques of Sayida Zaynab and Nafisa. But because of the paucity of work assigned to craftsmen, there are no replacements for those who die. What shall we do five years from now in a country which is among the world's richest for monuments?

Now that the unthinkable has happened, we have only one marble-worker, two or three carpenters, two inlaid-window workers, one door and window maker, only a small number of specialists in stone grinding....

I remarked to the Islamic antiquities expert: 'But the ceiling and windows in these houses are not antiquities!' He replied, 'If you want my opinion, I would record them as Arabic antiquities and would not destroy them, especially the Zaghib house. Our law for the preservation of antiquities extends to the time of the Khedive Isma'il, and this house was built only a few years thereafter.' He added that all this means that there is a lack of appreciation for the arts and for the preservation of Cairo's charm. How lovely it was to see two such examples of Arabic art overlooking Midan at-Tahrir! How long will we keep changing old Cairo and destroying the essence of the Fatimid era by erecting incongruous modern buildings?

The architect Hasan Fathi approaches the subject from the standpoint of the design and form of Cairo within the same general problem faced by all Arab nations. The recent transformation in our society brought about by the introduction of industry has impelled us to rebuild and replan Cairo. In his words, 'We are pre-occupied with the technical, engineering aspect, but from an architectural -- and even scientific -- point of view gross errors are being committed... We resort to building cheap houses in the belief that they are economical. But it is certain that beautiful things are usually the most economical.' He believes that the Arab style, by which he means spacious courtyards, not ornamentation, suits our city best, and supports his theory with the research conducted by the American, Daniel Dunham.

Hasan Fathi insists on the necessity of retaining the Arab style for Cairo, at least in old sections like the Husayn quarter, and complains bitterly of the buildings to be erected around the square, which will distort the beautiful Arab aspect with clothes lines. It will end up like the Citadel Square, famous for its beautiful minarets, but marred now by a patchwork of modern residential buildings. Hasan Fathi's solution is to establish an Institute of Cairo Studies. By the Year 2000, Cairo will have a population of ten million, which means a new Cairo. The problem is boundless. Study and preparation, beginning now, will give us the opportunity to plan the Cairo of the twenty-first century.

What form should it take? That of the present, or a better form, more suitable to the twenty-first century?

'I am sure that through institutionalized study we shall find that the Arabic style is best for our city, but it must be understood that the importance

of this style is derived from the best use of open space in our climate. I do not think that the climate is going to change in the next century.'

Hasan Fathi suggests that whenever great monuments are threatened, the project in question be submitted for discussion to experts, architects, and the people, as has been done in Athens.

It is clear that the demolition zone which has extended to these two houses has extended to Fatimid Cairo as well, which is disappearing day by day. The development and beautification of Cairo must not be carried out at the expense of art, craftsmanship, or the character of the city. To solve the problem, it is essential for all specialists in housing, tourism, and antiquities to meet and solve the problem by construction and demolition.

Besides reading al-Ahram, I have been busy with other activities. Late in September I gave a lecture on the history of medieval Cairo and conducted a tour of representative Islamic monuments for newly-arrived Fulbright professors and students. I am to do the same in March for a study group which will visit Cairo under the auspices of the Brooklyn Museum. Work on my dissertation proceeds slowly, and I shall not be able to complete it according to schedule, mainly because I have stumbled across some relevant manuscripts, copies of which do not exist in Cairo. This means that I shall have to do some work in Istanbul and somehow or another read two manuscripts found in German libraries. I have progressed far enough, however, to start submitting in installments to my thesis director at UCLA the first draft of the first chapter -- a comparative study of the Arabic historians for the Bahri Mamluk period.

Donald P. Little

SENSATIONAL DISCOVERIES IN UPPER EGYPT

To material sent from Egypt by Bernard V. Bothmer, Trustee of the Center and former Director in Cairo, we owe an account of the extraordinary results of work in the Theban necropolis conducted by German and Polish expeditions.

The German Archaeological Institute has been engaged in clearing Tomb No. 386, belonging to a General Antef who lived under Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II, the Eleventh Dynasty king who reunited Egypt after the breakdown of the First Intermediate Period. This tomb, lying in front of the Mentuhotep temple, which adjoins the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahri, has long been known, but like many other tombs of the region has never been completely excavated. (Lepsius sent back to the Berlin Museum a sarcophagus bearing the name of Antef around 130 years ago.) The tomb is an enormous one, but it has long been protected by many meters of debris; part of its rock-ceiling has fallen in; and a considerable portion of it lies under a causeway leading toward Deir el-Bahri, which was built by Tuthmosis III -- of this causeway, more below.

The first important find of the expedition of the German Institute, under the young Egyptologists Jürgen Settgast and Dieter Arnold, was made by the Egyptian

"Gufti", Abu Said, at a depth of four meters. This is a painted sandstone head, presumably from a seated statue of the owner of the tomb, nearly life size (15 cm.) and in almost perfect condition (Cairo Museum JE 89858). While this head is a valuable addition to the limited number of sculptures in the round that can be dated to the Eleventh Dynasty, the paintings on mud-plaster found in the tomb are more sensational discoveries, for they include scenes hitherto unheard of -- a sea (or river?) battle, with wounded being evacuated in baskets, for example, and the storming of a fortress in the Eastern Delta -- along with hunting scenes and others more familiar to students of Egyptian art, all executed in brilliant color. The full publication of these finds must await the long and painstaking work of preservation.

At the end of the processional way of Tuthmosis III mentioned above, an imposing road thirty-eight meters wide already appearing in Winlock's plans, the Poles have discovered the hitherto unknown funerary temple of Tuthmosis III, built against the cliff behind the gap between the Mentuhotep and Hatshepsut temples. It must have been destroyed by a fall of rock as long ago as the Twentieth Dynasty, for the latest inscriptions found in it are graffiti referring to a funerary temple of Ramesses IV, itself otherwise unlocated. In the debris, the Poles have found a statue of Senmut with the cartouche of Tuthmosis III on the shoulder, and also a statue of a man named Amenemhet, dated by cartouches to Ramesses II. The temple must have been larger than the top terrace of Hatshepsut's temple; its columns are greater in diameter than those of the queen.

Other recent discoveries in Egypt include a new building of Akhenaton at Hagg Qandil which has come to light in preparing increased acreage for irrigation, and, at Abuqir, on the outskirts of the town near the sea, a maze of corridors and chambers four meters underground, forming an ibis cemetery similar to the "catacombs" at Tuna el Gebel.

NOTES AND NEWS

Sir Alan Henderson Gardiner, in Memoriam

The dean of Egyptology in the English-speaking world, Sir Alan Henderson Gardiner, died on December 26 at his home in Oxford, England, at the age of eighty-four. He was almost the last of a great generation of Egyptologists, who saw the emergence of Egyptian studies, archaeological, historical, and philological, from dim speculation into the surer light of science.

Sir Alan was a great scholar. More than that, he was a generous and kindly man, always ready to share his knowledge and his not inconsiderable wealth. The extent of the encouragement and material aid he gave to younger workers in his chosen field will probably never be known, for he was a modest person, not given to display, even of his erudition.

Older members of ARCE will be interested to know that Judge Jasper Y. Brinton and Mrs. Brinton are still living in Cairo and maintain their long-time connections with the Center's activities. Judge Brinton is among the senior members of ARCE, either in Egypt or anywhere else, calculated in terms of length

of membership. The Brintons entertain at their Zamalek home in the same gracious manner that has always characterized their hospitality, and friends enjoyed this year their annual New Year's tea, which has been a feature of Cairo social life for over thirty years. Their son, John, now in business in Beirut, was in Cairo with his wife and young daughter over the holidays.

One of the problems of the Nubian expedition at Gebel Adda is that of communications. With no telephone or postoffice facilities on the Gebel Adda side of the river, the village of Bellana across the Nile provides some help. However, telephone service at this remote point in Nubia has severe limitations. The telegraph service is somewhat better, but the requirement that all telegrams be in Arabic poses its problems. By the time a wire has been translated in Cairo from English into Arabic, with numerous words, names, and phrases that simply have no close counterpart in Arabic, it is likely to come out at the other end with little recognizable meaning. Even without the language barrier, peculiar things can happen. For example, the use of extravagant metaphors in Arabic sometimes produces weird results. The story is told of a wire reaching Cairo from Nubia stating that a certain person had been "stuck by lightning." Consternation prevailed in Cairo until the Cairo friend, whose knowledge of Arabic was only average, finally discovered that the phrase really meant simply that the person in question "has sent you a telegram."

On the trip to Sinai, Ray Smith, Director of the Center in Cairo, recalled that the biblical manna had been mentioned in connection with the Moses story. He could find no one who had ever seen manna or even knew what it was. He decided to investigate and found out from the monks at St. Catherine's that manna is still known in Sinai. It seems that the tamarisk tree exudes drops of syrup during a period each winter and that, when gathered drop by drop, the resulting product is very palatable. No manna is thought to reach trade channels any more, but a small quantity each year is gathered by the bedouins for their own consumption. Arrangements have been made to obtain a small bottle of manna, which Ray Smith is determined to take back to the United States as a novel feature of some future dinner at his home. He wonders whether the traditional reference to manna "from heaven" could reflect the fact that this delicacy does indeed sprinkle down to the ground in drops unless it is laboriously harvested.

ARCE has been advised by Dr. Shoukry, Director of the Department of Antiquities, that it will receive permission to undertake a study of the literally mountains of glass fragments which have accumulated at the Fostat store-room throughout the years as Fostat diggers, legal and otherwise, have turned them in. There must be at least hundreds of thousands of these fragments, which will permit the establishment of an accurate catalogue of glass shapes, techniques, and decoration, which prevailed at Fostat throughout its long period of occupancy.

The following items have been gleaned from Egyptian newspapers of recent date.

It is said that work is about to begin on the new Graeco-Roman Museum at Alexandria, to be located in Al Shallalat garden, the foundation-stone for which was laid two years ago. Other museums are projected for Port Said, Rosetta, and Tanta, chiefly for the exhibition of antiquities found in the regions in which those cities are located.

The Yugoslavian mission now excavating in Nubia is engaged in the delicate task of removing the Christian frescoes from the walls of the temple of Ramesses II at Wadi el Sabua. This temple consists of two parts, one of which is hewn out of the rock. The first consists of a court and two halls, each supported by five figures of Ramesses. The rock-sanctuary has a single hall, formerly used by the Christians as a chapel. In this, the remains of frescoes overlay the reliefs and inscriptions of Ramesses II.

Wadi el Sabua, Valley of Lions, gets its name from the human and hawk-headed sphinxes which guarded the entrance of the temple of Ramesses II. Before it once stood four colossal statues of the king: only one of them still stands. The Egyptian Department of Antiquities is clearing the site, which includes a rock-cut temple of Amenhotep III. The French Institute, cooperating with the Swiss Institute has worked on recording the reliefs and inscriptions and the Documentation Center is photographing the remains in black and white and in color.

A new archaeological discovery has been made near Sidon in the Lebanon, the scene of sensational discoveries of a century or so past. Recent excavation has uncovered tombs containing marble sarcophagi of the Roman and Byzantine periods and what is presumably a Phoenician burial, in which were the skeletal remains of a woman(?) wearing a jewel-studded gold crown and surrounded by necklaces, rings, gold anklets, a bronze mirror, and a kohl-box.

ON EGYPTIAN RELIGION

Professor Alexandre Piankoff, consulting Egyptologist of the Center in Cairo, has contributed for the Newsletter the following short summaries of three of his recent works. All deal with some aspect of Egyptian funerary religion.

A. The Tomb of Ramesses VI

The grave of the kings of the Old Kingdom (2778-2423 B. C.) was the pyramid. It symbolized the western mountain; it represented also the primeval hill out of which the sun-god burst at the beginning of time. The pyramid expressed in stone the exaltation and deification of the central power. Egypt at this period was the first centralized state in history.

At the beginning of the 18th Dynasty (c. 1600 B. C.) in Thebes a change took place. The pyramid was abolished -- its place was taken by the peak of the western mountain ridge which the population of Thebes called Mistress of Silence. Its flanks were burrowed by deep corridors, which the Greeks called "syringes", or flutes, because they reminded them of the long flutes of the shepherds. These were the tombs of the 18th, 19th, and 20th Dynasties. The tombs of the kings of this period contain a vast religious literature, which represents the outcome of the speculations of the priests. One of these tombs, that of Ramesses VI, contains complete versions of the Book of Gates, the Book of Caverns, and the Amduat, or Book of What is in the Netherworld. These compositions deal with the resurrection of the king, identified with the sun-god Re. We learn from them how at this distant period the Egyptians conceived the cosmos. We also discern the different and frequently contradictory conceptions of the priests. Here is the key to the reform of Akhenaton, the heretic king of the 18th Dynasty and to the reaction which followed his reign.

B. The Litany of Re (in press)

For the understanding of Egyptian polytheism the so-called Litany of Re is perhaps the most important theological work of the Egyptian New Kingdom (1580-1090 B. C.). The litany is usually engraved on the walls of the first corridors of the royal tombs of the 19th and 20th Dynasties, but it was probably composed during the 18th Dynasty, as it already appears on the shroud of Thutmose III (1504-1450 B. C.).

Here Re is the cosmic principle of energy, who manifests himself in his numerous bodies. These bodies are his names -- and they are gods. The creation is continuous: it is a flow of living manifestations towards extinction -- death. But out of death a new Re is to be born, sprouting new life. Two gods personify the cycle of life and death: Re, who with his living manifestations moves toward death, and Osiris, the dead god, who represents the process of rebirth. The dead king for whom these texts were designed participates in this process; in death he is Osiris, but he will come to life again and be identified with Re.

C. The Pyramid of Unas (in preparation)

The pyramid of King Unas (about 2350 B. C.) is the first pyramid in which are inscribed religious texts -- probably the oldest religious lore which has come down to us in its original form. These texts deal with the life after death of the dead king. They have been frequently translated, but have mostly been treated philologically, their sequence disregarded.

If we reconstruct their sequence, we get the following picture: The body of the king was embalmed, taken over to the west bank of the Nile, and then carried to the pyramid, which symbolized the western mountain, behind which the sun disappears at sunset. The myth of Osiris was enacted, with the dead king as Osiris, the new king as Horus. Horus officiated and revived his dead father. But all this was indicated symbolically. Thus, the door leading into the pyramid was the door of heaven, the crossing of the Nile was the sailing of the sun-god on the celestial river. No ceremony was described, only implied. Finally came the exaltation: the king went to meet his father, the god Atum, the All.

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During this period the Wilbour Library received the next copies of periodicals listed in the Supplement to Newsletter 48 and Newsletter 49. Not previously listed are:

FASTI ARCHAEOLOGICI, XIV. Florence, International Association for Classical Archaeology, 1962.

REVUE INTERNATIONALE DES DROITS DE L'ANTIQUITÉ, Third Series. Brussels, Office International de Librairie, vol. I, 1954 through vol. IX, 1962.

